

Roger of Sicily, formed this part of Italy into a political entity which, lasting for 800 years, has been variously called "the kingdom of Sicily," "the two Sicilies," or more familiarly the "Regno" or "Kingdom." Geography at once favours and hinders the unity of Lower Italy. The vast mountain-barrier of the Abruzzi, the "Gran Sasso" of Italy, continued by the mountains that approach to Benevento, cut it off from the central and northern part of the peninsula. Yet Nature has deeply divided its component parts. Great mountain ranges sever from one another the fertile plain that is watered by the Volturno and Garigliano, the plateaux of Apulia, the great depressed lowlands stretching from Otranto round the Gulf of Taranto to the basin of the Crati, and make each of them self-contained and isolated. The whole of the Abruzzi was in the mediaeval ages almost inaccessible, with vast forests, mountains, and waste, offering little passage or attraction, Apulia, divided from Calabria by woods, torrents, and narrow gorges, communicating with it only by Potenza, or the long shore-route, shut off from the western plains by the great backbone of the Apennines, and only to be entered

from that
direction by Troja, Melfi, and the
passes under
Monte Vulture, presents in itself much
diversity
of soil and altitude. From the
Apennines down
to Andria is a great grassy extent
covered with
sheep. A low-lying tract stretching
along the coast
from Siponto to Brindisi, fertile and full
of towns,